



BUDGET COMMITTEE



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Senate Budget Committee Chairman Judd Gregg (R-NH)

**Text from Senate Floor Speech
on the Second Look at Wasteful Spending Amendment**

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Wednesday, January 24, 2007**

Mr. **Gregg**: Mr. President, I want to thank the Senator from Tennessee for his support of the Second Look at Waste amendment, which I've offered.

Senators aren't always necessarily cogent and logical, and he makes the point as a former governor who had the Line-Item Veto, which is a much stronger authority than what we have, that in this amendment, that this is important to managing the fiscal house -- to making sure that items which get into legislation as a result of being put in there arbitrarily by some individual member of Congress, but which are not subject to the light of day in the traditional way by being brought across the floor as individual items, but rather are put into major pieces of legislation sometimes representing hundreds of billions of dollars of spending, that those items can be reviewed again and get a vote as to their credibility and to their appropriateness and whether or not they represent something that American tax dollars should be spent on.

In this proposal, this fast track rescission, which is what it really is, is not a partisan proposal. In fact, as proposed in my amendment, a Second Look at Waste, it would actually be primarily under the control of the next President. It has a four-year window of activity and then it sunsets. And by the time it would get into law, should it pass the Senate and then pass the House, it's likely that this president would only have probably a year and a half to use this authority, and then the next President, whoever that President may be -- it may be a Republican, it may be a Democrat -- will have the authority to use this rescission ability for 2 1/2 years. So it's not partisan.

Secondly, it was drafted, as the Senator from Tennessee noted -- it was drafted to basically mirror a proposal put forward by Senator Daschle. In fact, I've called this amendment "Daughter of Daschle." It's essentially the Daschle amendment as offered back in 1995, which was cosponsored by Senator Byrd. And I -- there are only two major

changes -- well, three major changes, and I've already said that -- to those that have asked me -- that I'm willing to adjust those changes to bring it even more in line with Daschle.

One of the changes in this bill from the Daschle bill was that the President would have 300 days to send up his rescission notice. And some people have expressed concern that that gives the President the ability to use that rescission notice as a club over people's heads. The reason we gave the President 300 days in this amendment was that we had reduced the number of rescission notices in the Daschle amendment, there were potentially 13 actions available to the President, in this amendment there are only four available to the President. And therefore in the Daschle amendment it was required that the rescission notice be sent up quick -- soon after the bill was signed. But, of course, with 13 different opportunities, it could go on all year long. We felt since we were reducing it to four that we should give more the President more leeway as to when he sent those rescission notices up. But I can understand the argument. In fact, I accept the argument that maybe that's too much authority in the sense it gives the Presidents too much leverage over the Congress. So when, I hope, I'm using the term "when," when this amendment comes forward in an amendable form, I will offer an amendment to reduce the 300 days back to 30 days so that the President would have to send his rescission notices up within 30 days of the lobbying signed in order to orchestrate -- or that he's asking us to take a second look at and that should adjust that problem. So that would bring us pretty much in line with what the Daschle amendment originally was.

The other area that it differs is in the issue that it deals with mandatory spending. Some people have said new mandatory spending, not new existing veterans programs or Medicare or Medicaid. But if there is a new mandatory program that can also be subject to the President asking for a second look at it. This has been argued by some on the other side that this would undermine the ability to reach a comprehensive settlement on entitlement reform. That's really a straw dog. That argument has no legs. The practical matter is that if a President reaches an agreement with the Congress on something as extraordinarily important as major entitlement reform, part of that agreement is going to be that the president signed off on it. Well, the President might come back and change it later on with rescission notices, that argument has really got no legs. It's being made for the purpose of being a cover for folks who want to vote against this amendment. Don't use that as an excuse.

What it amendment essentially does is allows the Congress to fulfill its obligation to make sure that money, which we are sent by our taxpayers, is spent effectively, honestly, appropriately and without waste. And it gives the Executive Branch a role in asking the question of the Congress, did you really mean to spend this money? And I have to -- I've been here for a while -- 14 years in the Senate -- and I have seen a lot of bills come across this floor which were fairly large and when I took a look at them after I maybe had voted for them, I realized there were some things in there that I wish weren't in there. I voted for the highway bill, which had the "Bridge to Nowhere" -- the famous highway bill. But had I voted for it I think I would have wanted to take a second look at some of the projects in that bill. The same is true of a lot of our appropriations bills when we get to the end of the year. When we haven't gotten our appropriations process completed

properly, we lump many appropriations bills into one and we call it an omnibus appropriations bill. Those bills tend to get items in them which have received no scrutiny. Which are simply the result of an earmark for the purposes of accomplishing something which some member of the Senate or the House feels is appropriate, but which one suspects if the entire House or Senate were to take a look at, well, better to put that money towards reducing the deficit than towards spending the money in this specific area.

So this bill is, as I've said, and as the Senator from Tennessee so eloquently said, a Second Look at Waste amendment. The purpose is to give us, the Congress, another tool to manage waste. I had wished it had come up last week because quite honestly, I thought it was much more appropriate last week. But it's now been put on this bill, out of an agreement which I reached with the Senator from Nevada, the Majority Leader -- and I respected his position and I admire his leadership around here and I didn't want to create a situation where the lobbying bill got tied up forever over this issue and the Senator from West Virginia said he would do that if I kept this amendment on the lobbying bill. So I agreed to put it off and bring it forward at this time. So hopefully nobody when we get to the issue of cloture is going to vote against cloture on the theory that it's not appropriate to this bill because, as I said earlier, I think people are stopped from making that position.

That's a technical, legal term, but out of fairness, you can't make that case because basically the reason this amendment is on this bill is because I was asked to put it on this bill by the Majority Leader. And, therefore, that's why we're going forward at this time. And so this is going to be the opportunity for members of the Senate to vote on whether or not they believe a tool which will significantly improve our capacity to manage earmarks, to manage waste is going to have a chance to be passed.

It is a tool which has been offered by myself but which was actually offered by Senator Daschle and which was actually voted for by 37 members of the Democratic Party at that time, 20 of whom are still serving in the Senate. So it does not seem unreasonable that we bring it up and pass it. I did want to come down and express my appreciation to the Senator from Tennessee.

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